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PRISONERS OF HOPE

CHAPTER I

A SLOOP COMES IN

"SHE will reach the wharf in half an hour."

The speaker shaded her eyes with a great fan of carved ivory and painted silk. They were beautiful eyes ; large, brown, perfect in shape and expression, and set in a lovely, imperious, laughing face. The divinity to whom they belonged was clad in a gown of green dimity, flowered with pink roses, and trimmed about the neck and half sleeves with a fall of yellow lace. The gown was made according to the latest Paris mode, as described in a year-old letter from the court of Charles the Second, and its wearer gazed from under her fan towards the waters of the great bay of Chesapeake, in his Majesty's most loyal and well beloved dominion of Virginia.

The object of her attention was a large sloop that had left the bay and was sailing up a wide inlet or creek that pierced the land, cork-screw fashion, until it vanished from sight amidst innumerable green marshes. The channel, indicated by a deeper blue in the midst of an expanse of shoal water, was narrow, and wound like a gleaming snake in and out among the interminable succession of marsh islets. The vessel, following its curves, tacked continually,